

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 8072

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, IN
SUBJECT: BIODATA ON MEMBERS OF PRIME MINISTER'S ENTOURAGE

REF: STATE 124714

1. A.G. ASRANI IS A POISED, COMPETENT AND HARD-WORKING OFFICER WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE FOUND HIM FRIENDLY, ACCESSIBLE AND, FOR THE MOST PART, COOPERATIVE, DESPITE OCCASIONAL LAPSES IN FOLLOWING THROUGH ON MATTERS RAISED IN DISCUSSIONS. PROFESSIONALLY, HE COMPARES WELL WITH HIS PEERS, AND HE WAS VERY HELPFUL IN PREPARING THE JOINT COMMISSION MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE DURING PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT. ASRANI HAS A BROTHER LIVING IN NEW YORK CITY.

2. S.V. PURUSHOTTAM IS A VERY BRIGHT AND SOPHISTICATED OFFICER WITH A GREAT DEAL OF POISE AND CHARM. A KAYASTHA (SCRIBE) CASTE BIHARI, HIS PROSPECTS FOR SPEEDY ADVANCEMENT IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE APPEAR PROMISING. AS USIS'S KEY CONTACT IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT, HE DEMONSTRATED A CONFIDENT FEEL FOR PRESS RELATIONS. AN ACTIVIST BY TEMPERAMENT RATHER THAN A BUREAUCRAT, HE REFLECTED A GENUINE OPENESS TO SUGGESTIONS AND WAS COOPERATIVE AND CREATIVE IN SEEKING WAYS TO FACILITATE COVERAGE ARRANGEMENTS. DISCUSSING PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S UPCOMING VISIT TO WASHINGTON, USICA HAS FOUND HIM TO BE WELL INFORMED AND FORTHCOMING ON GOI PLANNING FOR THE VISIT. BEYOND MATTERS RELATED TO THE TWO VISITS, PURUSHO-
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TTAM HAS EXHIBITED AN IMPRESSIVE FAMILIARITY WITH GOI FOREIGN POLICY AND INDIAN INTEESTS. HE IS A CONFIDENT AND ARTICULATE SPOKESMAN IN ENGLISH AND HINDI WHOM INDIAN NEWSMEN HAVE PRAISED IN PRIVATE CONVERSTIONS FOR HIS GRASP OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES AND HIS ABILITY TO PRESENT GOI POSITIONS ON THEM. NEWSMEN RATE HIM WELL ABOVE THE TYPICAL JOINT SECRETARY AT OTHER MINISTRIES. AFFABLE AND OUTGOING BY NATURE, HE IS A GOOD CONVERSTIONALIST AND

AN EXCELLENT MIXER. HE HAS ATTENDED A NUMBERHCF USICA ACTIVITIES.
HE APPEARS TO BE ON EXCELLENT TERMS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

3. A SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATE, KANTILAL DESAI, 52 YEARS OLD,
HAS SERVED AS A SECRETARY-WITHOUT-PAY IN HIS FATHER'S OFFICE
SINCE 1964. SOME OBSERVERS CONSIDER HIM THE PRIME MINISTER'S
HEAVIEST POLITICAL LIABILITY. HIS OCCUPATIONS HAVE INCLUDED
INSURANCE AGENT, BUSINESSMAN, LOBBYIST AND INDUSTRIALIST, AND
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HE HAS FROM TIME TO TIME SOUGHT TO CASH
IN ON HIS FATHER'S PROMINENCE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1962 PRIME
MINISTER NEHRU LAID THE CORNERSTONE FOR KANTILAL'S PERMEMANENT
MAGNETS FACTORY IN BOMBAY. THSE DAYS KANTILAL IS A MORE OR LESS
PERMANENT BOARDER AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE. HE HAS BEEN
KNOWN TO DRINK, BUT NOT IN HIS FATHER'S PRESENCE, AND HE RELISHEUJ
AN OCCASIONAL NON-VEGETARIAN DISH. IN NOVEMBER 1977 KANTILAL
SUFFERED A FRACTURED LEG IN A PLANE CRASH FROM WHICH THE PRIME
MINISTER EMERGED MIRACULOUSLY UNSCATHED. KANTILAL AND HIS WIFE
HAVE TWO SONS, BOTH IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES, STUDYING IN BOMBAY.

4. IN THE EVENT PADMABHEN DESAI ACCOMPANIES THE PRIME MINISTER,
HERE IS SOME BIODATA ON HER. MRS. PADMABHEN DESAI, WIFE OF KANTI-
LAL DESAI, IS A QUIET, ATTRACTIVE WOMEN IN HER LATE FORTIES.
SHE IS THE GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE FONDER OF THE WELL-KNOWN MA-
HARASHTRAN INDUSTRIAL HOUSE OF KIRLOSKAR. UNTIL KANTILAL'S
ACCIDENT IN NOVEMBER 1977, SHE REMAINED VERY MUCH IN THE BACKGROUND.
RECENTLY, HOWEVER, SHE HAS ACCOMPANIED THE PRIME MINISTER ON SEVERAL
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OF HIS TRIPS, INCLUDING HIS TRIP TO NEPAL.
GOHEEN

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